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Contact: Sen. Mark Schauer
Phone: 517-373-2426

MI-Choice Waivers Dominate Long Term Care Discussion

Senate Democrats Hold First in a Series of Town Halls on Long Term Care

LANSING—The availability of in-home and community-based long term care was the main topic of discussion in Battle Creek this afternoon at the first in a series of forums hosted by Senate Democrats. The group also discussed the findings of Governor Granholm's Long Term Care Task Force. These forums are intended to provide citizens an opportunity to voice their concerns and suggestions regarding long term care in the state of Michigan.

State Senator Mark Schauer hosted the event and served on a panel with Mary Bauer from the Battle Creek Area Agency on Aging, Jane Church of the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, and Norma DeLisle from the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition.

"This forum is an opportunity to empower citizens and ensure that we address their concerns regarding long term care. When putting together legislation that affects so many different people in so many different ways, it is vital that we gather information from all sides," said Schauer.

On average, caring for someone requiring daily monitoring costs \$43 per day if that person lives in their own home. It costs Medicaid \$140 per day to care for that same person in a nursing home or other institutionalized facility.

"Long term care reform is an urgent matter," said Senator Schauer. "It is a disservice to our most vulnerable citizens to force them into institutionalized settings when we can provide the same care at a better price within their own home. Studies show that people are happier and healthier longer when they remain in their homes."

Estimates show that by 2010 the number of Michigan residents who will need long-term care will likely outstrip the number of people available to care for them. By 2020, 1 in 6 Michigan citizens will be over 65. In the current system, it is easier for Medicaid patients to get long-term care by entering a nursing home than to get in-home or community-based care because of the obstacles to receiving MI-Choice funding waivers. MI-Choice waivers are the mechanism by which Medicaid long term care recipients obtain funding for in-home and community-based care.

“We must fully fund the MI-Choice waiver program,” said Schauer. “This is an obvious and cost efficient step toward solving an enormous problem. We can no longer permit the current disparities that exist in long term care.”

The Governor’s Long Term Care Task Force recently released its findings. Their final report focused on a more efficient distribution of long term care resources. The Commission emphasized the fact that in order for the system to both provide quality care and remain financially solvent, the MI-Choice waiver program must be fully funded and long term care workers need to be paid a more competitive salary.

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